

# Khoekhoe language

The **Khoekhoe** /ˈkɔɪkɔɪ/ language (*Khoekhoegowab*), also known by the ethnic terms **Nama** (*Namagowab*) /ˈnɑːmə/,<sup>[5]</sup> **Damara** (*ǀNūkhoegowab*), or **Nama/Damara**<sup>[6][7]</sup> and formerly as **Hottentot**,<sup>[a]</sup> is the most widespread of the non-Bantu languages of Southern Africa that make heavy use of click consonants and therefore were formerly classified as Khoisan, a now defunct grouping. It belongs to the Khoe language family, and is spoken in Namibia, Botswana, and South Africa primarily by three ethnic groups, Namakhoen, ǀNūkhoen, and Haillomkhoen.

The Haillom, who had spoken a Juu language, later shifted to Khoekhoe. The name for the speakers, *Khoekhoen*, is from the word *khoe* "person", with reduplication and the suffix *-n* to indicate the general plural. Georg Friedrich Wreede was the first European to study the language, after arriving in ǁHui!gaeb (later Cape Town) in 1659.

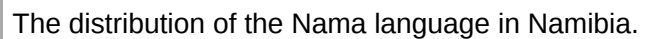
Khoekhoe is a national language in Namibia, where it is used for teaching up to the university level as well as in the public administration. In Namibia and South Africa, state-owned broadcasting corporations produce and broadcast radio programmes in Khoekhoegowab.

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Khoekhoe	
Nama/Damara	
<i>Khoekhoegowab</i>	
Native to	Namibia, Botswana and South Africa
Region	Orange River, Great Namaland, Damaraland
Ethnicity	Khoikhoi, Nama, Damara, Haillom
Native speakers	200,000 ± 10,000 (2011) <sup>[1]</sup>
Language family	<div>Khoe<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Khoekhoe</b></li></ul></div>
Dialects	Nama–Damara <div>Haillom–ǀĀkhoe</div>
Official status	
Official language in	<span><span></span></span> Namibia
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	Either: <div>naq – Khoekhoe, Nama</div> <div>hgm – Haillom</div>
Glottolog	nort3245 ( <span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nort3245</span> ) <div>Subfamily: North Khoekhoe<sup>[2]</sup></div> <div>nama1264 (<span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/nama1264</span>)</div> <div>Language: Nama<sup>[3]</sup></div> <div>haio1238 (<span>http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/haio1238</span>)</div> <div>Language: Haillom-Akhoe<sup>[4]</sup></div>

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Modern scholars generally see three dialects:

- They are distinct enough that they might be considered two or three distinct languages.

- Eini (extinct) is also close but is now generally counted as a distinct language.

## Vowels

There are 5 vowel qualities, found as oral /i e a o u/ and nasal /ĩ ã û/. /u/ is strongly rounded, /o/ only slightly so. /a/ is the only vowel with notable allophony; it is pronounced [ə] before /i/ or /u/.

## Tone

Nama has been described as having three<sup>[8]</sup> or four<sup>[9][10][11]</sup> tones, /á, ā, à/ or /ǎ, á, à, ǎ/, which may occur on each mora (vowels and final nasal consonants). The high tone is higher when it occurs on one of the high vowels (/í ú/) or on a nasal (/ń ń/) than on mid or low vowels (/é á ó/).<sup>[8]</sup>

The tones combine into a limited number of 'tone melodies' (word tones), which have sandhi forms in certain syntactic environments. The most important melodies, in their citation and main sandhi forms, are as follows:<sup>[9]</sup>

The Khoe language	
<b>Person</b>	Khoe-i
<b>People</b>	Khoekhoen
<b>Language</b>	Khoekhoegowab



Nama man giving lessons on the Khoekhoe language

Citation	Sandhi	Meaning	Melody
ĩ ʼòǀms	ĩ ʼòǀms	butting, hitting s.t.	low
ĩ ʼòǀms		an udder	low rising
ĩ ʼòǀms		forcing out of a burrow	mid
ĩ ʼòǀms	ĩ ʼòǀms	a pollard	high rising
ĩ ʼòǀms	ĩ ʼòǀms	coagulating, prizing out [a thorn]	low falling
ĩ ʼòǀms	ĩ ʼòǀms	a fist	high falling

## Stress

Within a phrase, lexical words receive greater stress than grammatical words. Within a word, the first syllable receives the most stress. Subsequent syllables receive less and less stress and are spoken more and more quickly.

## Consonants

Nama has 31 consonants: 20 clicks and only 11 non-clicks.

### Non-clicks

	<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Nasal</u>	m	n		
<u>Plosive</u>	p ~ β	t ~ r	k	ʔ
<u>Affricate</u>		ts <sup>h</sup>	kx <sup>h</sup>	
<u>Fricative</u>		s	x	h

Between vowels, /p/ is pronounced [β] and /t/ is pronounced [r]. The affricate series is strongly aspirated, and may be analysed phonemically as aspirated stops; in the related Korana they are [t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>].

Beach (1938)<sup>[12]</sup> reported that the Khoekhoe of the time had a velar lateral ejective affricate, [kǀ́'], a common realisation or allophone of /kx'/ in languages with clicks. This sound no longer occurs in Khoekhoe but remains in its cousin Korana.

## Clicks

The clicks are doubly articulated consonants. Each click consists of one of four primary articulations or "influxes" and one of five secondary articulation or "effluxes". The combination results in 20 phonemes.<sup>[13]</sup>

accompaniment	affricated clicks		'sharp' clicks		standardised orthography (with " ! ")
	<u>dental clicks</u>	<u>lateral clicks</u>	<u>alveolar clicks</u>	<u>palatal clicks</u>	
<u>Tenuis</u>			!	‡	< !g >
<u>Aspirated</u>	<sup>h</sup>	<sup>h</sup>	! <sup>h</sup>	‡ <sup>h</sup>	< !kh >
<u>Nasal</u>	ᵛ	ᵛ	ᵛ!	ᵛ‡	< !n >
<b>Voiceless aspirated nasal</b>	ᵛ  <sup>h</sup>	ᵛ   <sup>h</sup>	ᵛ! <sup>h</sup>	ᵛ‡ <sup>h</sup>	< !h >
<u>Glottalized nasal</u>	ᵛ ˀ	ᵛ  ˀ	ᵛ!ˀ	ᵛ‡ˀ	< ! >

The aspiration on the aspirated clicks is often light but is 'raspier' than the aspirated nasal clicks, with a sound approaching the *ch* of Scottish *loch*. The glottalised clicks are clearly voiceless due to the hold before the release, and they are transcribed as simple voiceless clicks in the traditional orthography. The nasal component is not audible in initial position; the voiceless nasal component of the aspirated clicks is also difficult to hear when not between vowels, so to foreign ears, it may sound like a longer but less raspy version of the contour clicks.

Tindall notes that European learners almost invariably pronounce the lateral clicks by placing the tongue against the side teeth and that this articulation is "harsh and foreign to the native ear". The Namaqua instead cover the whole of the palate with the tongue and produce the sound "as far back in the palate as possible".<sup>[14]</sup>

## Phonotactics

Lexical root words consist of two or rarely three moras, in the form CVCV(C), CVV(C), or CVN(C). (The initial consonant is required.) The middle consonant may only be *w r m n* (*w* is *b~p* and *r* is *d~t*), while the final consonant (C) may only be *p, s, ts*. Each mora carries tone, but the second may only be high or medium, for six tone "melodies": HH, MH, LH, HM, MM, LM.

Oral vowel sequences in CVV are /ii ee aa oo uu ai [əi] ae ao au [əu] oa oe ui/. Due to the reduced number of nasal vowels, nasal sequences are /ĩ ã ãũ ãĩ [ẽĩ] ãũ [ẽũ] õã ãĩ/. Sequences ending in a high vowel (/ii uu ai au ui ãĩ ãũ ãĩ/) are pronounced more quickly than others (/ee aa oo ae ao oa oe ãã õã/), more like diphthongs and long vowels than like vowel sequences in hiatus. The tones are realised as contours. CVCV words tend to have the same vowel sequences, though there are many exceptions. The two tones are also more distinct.

Vowel-nasal sequences are restricted to non-front vowels: /am an om on um un/. Their tones are also realised as contours.

Grammatical particles have the form CV or CN, with any vowel or tone, where C may be any consonant but a click, and the latter cannot be NN. Suffixes and a third mora of a root, may have the form CV, CN, V, N, with any vowel or tone; there are also three C-only suffixes, *-p* 1m.sg, *-ts* 2m.sg, *-s* 2/3f.sg.

## Orthography

There have been several orthographies used for Nama. A *Khoekhoegowab dictionary* (Haacke 2000) uses the modern standard.

In standard orthography, the consonants *b d g* are used for words with one of the lower tone melodies and *p t k* for one of the higher tone melodies. *W* is only used between vowels, though it may be replaced with *b* or *p* according to melody. Overt tone marking is otherwise generally omitted.

Orthography	Transcription	Melody	Meaning
<i>gao</i>	/kǎǎ́/	low rising	'rule'
<i>kao</i>	/kǎǎ́/	high rising	'be dumbfounded'
<i>/hubu</i> (or <i>/huwu</i> )	/l̥ h̥ǔwú/	low rising	'to stop hurting'
<i>/hupu</i> (or <i>/huwu</i> )	/l̥ h̥ǔwǔ/	high rising	'to get out of breath'

Nasal vowels are written with a circumflex. All nasal vowels are long, as in *hû* /hũũ/ 'seven'. Long (double) vowels are otherwise written with a macron, as in *ā* /ʔǎǎ́/ 'to cry, weep'; these constitute two moras (two tone-bearing units).

A glottal stop is not written at the beginning of a word (where it is predictable), but it is transcribed with a hyphen in compound words, such as *gao-aob* /kǎǎ́ʔǎǎ́p/ 'chief'.

The clicks are written using the IPA symbols:

- | (a vertical bar) for a dental click
- || (a double vertical bar) for a lateral click
- ! (an exclamation mark) for an alveolar click
- ‡ (a double dagger) for a palatal click

Sometimes other characters are substituted, e.g. the hash (#) in place of ‡.<sup>[15]</sup>

## Grammar

Nama has a subject–object–verb word order, three nouns classes (*masculine/gu-class*, *feminine/di-class* and *neuter/n-class*) and three grammatical numbers (*singular*, *dual* and *plural*). Pronominal enclitics are used to mark person, gender, and number on the noun phrases.

	Singular	Dual	Plural	Gloss
<b>Feminine/Di-class</b>	Piris	Pirira	Piridi	<i>goat</i>
<b>Masculine/Gu-class</b>	Arib	Arikha	Arigu	<i>dog</i>
<b>Neutral/N-class</b>	Khoe-i	Khoera	Khoen	<i>people</i>

## PGN Markers

The PGN (person-gender-number) markers are enclitic pronouns that attach to noun phrases.<sup>[16]</sup> The PGN markers distinguish first, second, and third person, masculine, feminine, and neuter gender, and singular, dual, and plural number. The PGN markers can be divided into nominative, object, and oblique paradigms.

### Nominative PGN markers

	Masculine			Feminine			Neuter		
Person	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Singular	ta	ts	b/mi/ni	ta	s	s	—	—	-i
Dual	khom	kho	kha	m	ro	ra	m	ro	ra
Plural	ge	go	gu	se	so	di	da	du	n

## Object PGN markers

(PGN + *i*)

	Masculine			Feminine			Neuter		
Person	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Singular	te	tsi	bi/mi/ni	te	si	si	—	—	-i
Dual	khom	kho	kha	mi/im	ro	ra	mi/im	ro	ra
Plural	ge	go	gu	se	so	di	da	du	ni/in

## Oblique PGN markers

(PGN + *a*)

	Masculine			Feminine			Neuter		
Person	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3
Singular	ta	tsa	ba/ma/na	ta	sa	sa	—	—	-e
Dual	khoma	kho	kha	ma	ro	ra	mo	ro	ra
Plural	ge	go	ga	se	so	de	da	do	na

## Articles

Khoekhoe has four definite articles:<sup>[16]</sup> *ti*, *si*, *sa*, *//î*. These definite articles can be combined with PGN markers.

Examples from Haacke (2013):

- *si-khom* "we two males" (someone other than addressee and I)
- *sa-khom* "we two males" (addressee and I)
- *//î-khom* "we two males" (someone else referred to previously and I)

<b>ti</b>	<b>si</b>	<b>sa</b>	<b>//î</b>
+definite	+definite	+definite	+definite
+speaker	+speaker	+addressee	+discussed
+human	-addressee	+human	
+singular	+human		
	-singular		

## Clause Headings

There are three clause markers, *ge* (declarative), *kha* (interrogative), and *ko/km* (assertive). These markers appear in matrix clauses, and appear after the subject.<sup>[17]</sup>

## Sample text

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Following is a sample text in the Khoekhoe language.<sup>[18]</sup>

*Nē /kharib /!nâ da ge //Gûn tsî /Gaen tsî doan tsîn; tsî /Nopodi tsî /Khenadi tsî /huigu tsî /Amin tsîn; tsî /kharagagu /aon tsîna ra hō.*

In this region we find springbuck, oryx, and duiker; francolin, guinea fowl, bustard, and ostrich; and also various kinds of snake.

## Common words and phrases

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- !Gâi tsēs – Good day
- !Gâi Ilgoas – Good morning
- !Gâi !oes – Good evening
- Matisa – How are you?
- !Gâise !gû re – Goodbye
- //Khawa mûgus – See you soon

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## Notes

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- a. The term was applied to Cape Khoekhoe in particular.<sup>[7]</sup>

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## External links

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- Nama grammar and a story at Cornell (<http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/ling700/nama.htm>) (dead link as of January 2009; cached (<https://web.archive.org/web/20080715163548/http://instruct1.cit.cornell.edu/courses/ling700/nama.htm>) by the Internet Archive)
- Nama (Khoekhoegowab) Phrase Video Lessons (<http://www.wideopenspacesamy2.blogspot.com/2007/02/khoekhoegowab-language-lesson-videos.html>)
- KhoeSan Active Awareness Group (<https://web.archive.org/web/20091216022926/http://www.ksaag.org/>) (dead link as of 17 October 2010)
- An 8-minute clip of spoken Hottentot (khoekhoegowab) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6TZkkD1amE>)
- Khoekhoe phonology and a story by Johanna Brugman (<http://johannabrugman.com/Khoekhoe/Khoekhoe.html>) (dead as of January 2017; Internet Archive cache (<https://web.archive.org/web/20160304043220/http://johannabrugman.com/Khoekhoe/Khoekhoe.html>))
- Khoekhoe basic lexicon at the Global Lexicostatistical Database (<http://starling.rinet.ru/cgi-bin/response.cgi?root=new100&morpho=0&basename=new100\ckh\kkh&limit=-1>)
- Khoe music / field recordings (International Library of African Music) ([http://vital.seals.ac.za:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository?query=&root=vital%3A27072&f0=sm\\_mods\\_language%3A%22Khoe%22](http://vital.seals.ac.za:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository?query=&root=vital%3A27072&f0=sm_mods_language%3A%22Khoe%22))

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